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LOLLAPALOOSA

CONTENTS, ISSUE 5

PAGE 4 'THE BOB KANE BATMAN EXHIBIT- TWO VIEWS' BY ELAINE MARKOUTSAS AND NEIL TESSER

PAGE 7 'THE VOYAGERS' BY RON CLARK AND MITCH O'CONNELL

PAGE 13 'THE FICTION HOUSE ARTISTS' BY SUSAN LATTANZIO

PAGE 18 'THE HAUNTING BEAST' BY REX LINDSEY

PAGE 26 'A LONG LOOK BACKWARDS - MY 30-YEAR LOVE AFFAIR WITH EC' BY GEORGE G. SNOWDEN

PAGE 35 'THE SUPERHERO' BY MITCH O'CONNELL

PAGE 40 'THE GREAT COMIC BOOK WAR!' BY J. M. DEMATTEIS

PAGE 42 'OVERLOAD' BY MITCH O'CONNELL

ART CREDITS:

NEAL ADAMS p.22, 40 (LAYOUT)
DAN ADKINS p15 (PENCILS)
BILL ANDERSON p23 (INKS)
JOHN BEATTY p30 (PENCILS), 33 (INKS)
TERRY BEATTY p 14
MICHAEL CHEN p16
ERIC GEHLIN p24
EARL GEIER p34
ALAN HANLEY p25 (PENCILS)
HERB KANSAS p15 (INKS)
REX LINDSEY p 17-21
MITCH O'CONNELL COVER, 3-13, 17, 25 (INKS), 26, 28, 30 (INKS), 31, 33, 35-45
WENDI PINI p2
MIKE SAENZ BACK COVER
JOE STATON p. 23 (PENCILS)
GARY WRAY p 22, 47

THANKS TO: DON TRAVIS, MARY GREMMLER, TONY CASORA, ED QUINBY, SAM DE LA ROSA, CRAIG ZABLO, BILL GAINES, BOB TWILLING, ROBERT ROTH, MEILE GINABER, MARK HEIKE, MIKE SAENZ, MOM AND POP - PLUS MANY OTHERS.

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FOR BACK ISSUES OF LOLLAPALOOSA SEE P. 46

PUBLISHED BY MITCH O'CONNELL
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Bob Kane met us just inside the door of the little Circle Gallery on Michigan Avenue and, spinning briefly through the exhibit of his paintings, watercolors, and lithographs, he offered the sort of commentary one might not expect from an established and successful artist. "$350 for that large oil, yes." A laconic statement of fact; nothing strident here: "Now this is a series, the action follows from this painting throught to this one, that costs a little more... These sketches are, I think, $80. How about this litho? Unframed, it's only $150. If you buy it before I leave, I can sign it to you." We begged off, explaining the exigencies of the journalist's life, and sat down with Kane in the gallery's back room, which was filled with several of his larger pieces.

Without being unlikable, Kane is both a little vain and a bit proud; then again, he probably has a right to be. He carries his 58 years well (although one could argue whether he really looks "ten years younger," as he several times assured us he did). More important, 40 years ago he created Batman, one of the most original and enduring comic book heroes in history, the object of an unprecedented camp mania in the 60s, and the subject of a feature film due out in 1981. As Kane matter-of-factly pointed out, "Batman is now imbued in the American consciousness, like Mickey Mouse, hot dogs, and Davy Crockett."

Batman was born in 1939, when Kane was an 18-year-old artist drawing some of the jokier, light-hearted books for DC Comics. DC, buoyed by the success of their first "union suit character" a year earlier - fellow named Superman - asked Kane if he might come up with something similar. It turned out to be a fortuitous request, because the answer had been gestating in young Kane's mind for years. At 12, he had seen a Leonardo da Vinci sketch of the first glider, a winged contraption that was to be strapped to a man; to Kane, it looked like a different kind of glider, and the image of a "bat-man" took hold.

Da Vinci had competition, though in influencing Kane. "The dual identity idea came from Zorro, who I saw played by Douglas Fairbanks in the movies," Kane recalled - he was part of a street gang called the Zorros, in the Bronx. Another influence was the film called The Bat Whispers that came out in the late 30s. Similarly, the flicks helped inspire Batman's rogue's gallery of arch-fiends: Kane drew the hideous Two-Face from The Phantom of the Opera, and a film called The Man Who Laughs gave us the Joker. ("The title character had been scarred so that his face was set in a permanent smile, but the eyes above it were funereal.") The Penguin, you ask? Oh, he was lifted from the bird that adorned the 1930s packs of Kools.

Kane correctly perceived the range of possibilities for a nonsuperpowered, costumed crime-fighter who had to depend on his wits. The Batman is a normal human being - no red suns, no nuclear spiders - who, in Kane's words, "has what Superman didn't have. He has many more dimensions. When he started, I drew him very mysterioso, I used lots of shadows and mists in the artwork." Indeed, Batman's original costume featured a far more billowy cape, and a far more wolfish cowl, than he now sports. "He was much more vampirish," Kane explained "a sort of heroic Dracula figure." And Kane, who felt he understood the villainous type (from hanging out with some of the toughies in his neighborhood), figured the bat would strike terror into the criminal heart.

Kane claims to have liked the campyness of the Batman TV series - even though it exploded the original comic's brooding fantasy into silliness - but he realizes it was a fad. He's far less charitable about the artists, notably Neal Adams, who began drawing "Batman" for DC when Kane retired in 1966 (to paint and to write screenplays for film and TV). The move was publicized as Batman's "new look", since Adams was modernizing the by then somewhat stodgy Kane figures; but as Kane sees it, "the muscle boys came in and changed everything from the clean understated lines I'd used. And it didn't sell any better.

"I'm very down on ghost artists, the buys who come in and try to 'improve' what they never created. To the creator goes acclaim, but there's no credit for the imitator. My name will live forever. Forget their names."

A couple of young men in street clothes ambled into the room about then, and one began taking photos of Kane. "Are you press?" he asked, smiling. No, it turned out, just fans. "Well, go up to the front and get a piece of paper," Kane directed, "and I'll sign an autograph for you." The kids hadn't asked, but neither were they refusing.

TWO VIEWS, PART 2

The cult began to take flight in May of 1939, when some 500,000 folks plunked down 10 cents to buy Detective Comic No. 27. A six-page spread in that issued chronicled with assorted ZAPPs, TWWAAAPPs, POWs and ZONKs the ominous origin of what soon would be one of America's favorite comic superheroes.

Only about two dozen of those vintage comic books are known to exist today, unless a couple of yellowed, dog-eared copies are stashed unknown in some attics or basements. Bob Kane sure would like to have one. It's the only issue he's missing. At a recent comic book convention, someone offered to sell him one. But Kane walked away when he saw the $5,000 price tag. No discount, no deals, no autographs - not even for the man who made it all possible.

Kane was sort of a Boy Wonder in his field in his day. He was 18 when he created Batman. Superman has been fighting for truth, justice and the American way since 1938. And the time was ripe for another champion of justice. Comic book readers were taken with the story of Bruce Wayne, a young lad whose wealthy mother and father were shot on their way home from the movies during a robbery attempt. The 13-year-old boy had witnessed the dastardly crime and vowed "by the spirits of my parents to avenge their deaths by spending the rest of my life warring on all criminals."

Wayne became a master scientist, trained his body to perform amazing athletic feats. But he needed a disguise. He theorized that "criminals are a superstitious dastardly lot" and his camouflage "must be able to strike terror into their hearts. I must be a creature of the night, black, terrible, a..." A bat flew in, he interpreted it as an omen, and, voila! "this weird figure of the dark, this avenger of evil, the Batman." Then came sidekick Robin, the Batmobile, and special jargon (boomerangs became baterangs, martinis with black olives were batinis, and dancers did the batusi). Later the Batman TV show had so much appeal that ABC was flooded with protest calls in 1966 when 10 minutes of "Batman" were scrapped because of a special report on the aborted Gemini 8 mission.

There were comic books, radio, newspaper strips, film, and a multimillion-dollar merchandising campaign with more than 500 Batman products for Batmaniacs.

The TV series, which starred Adam West as Batman, still is in syndication and seen in 30 countries.

And now Batman originals are considered works of art, commanding up to $35,000. They grace the walls of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Whitney Museum, and many a celebrity's home. They recently were auctioned by the prestigious Sotheby Parke Bernet. Kane has created five colorful lithographs for a special exhibit of his work at the Circle Gallery on South Michigan Avenue, where he recently opened a show to benefit UNICEF for the International Year of the Child.

The Cartoonist has completed an authobiography and is negotiating with Warner Communications for a new Batman movie, currently budgeted for $15 million, to be released in 1981.
Says Kane, a casual, soft-spoken, and trim 57-year old who keeps it all in perspective: "I knew what I wanted way back and just stuck with it. I liked slapstick, pie-in-the-face cartoons. I used to be a copycat. I'd copy everything. And I doodled on the sides (sidewalks) of New York since I was about 8 years old. I drew on everything - school books, school walls, buses. I'd black out the teeth of girls on subway posters. Luckily it was with chalk and you could wipe it away.

While in high school he won a scholarship to study anatomy, which he found "quite thrilling" because of the nude female models ("it was better than Playboy").

On the strength of his sketches, he managed to land several free-lance jobs, including a plum assignment for $35 a week for Fleischer Studioes, which created Betty Boop.

Kane hawked his way into DC Comics, where Superman had been launched. One day he showed an editor some Flash Gordon figures he'd copies. The editor was impressed, and an encouraged Kane promised to develop a new superhero strip over the weekend.

He toiled over his drawing board nearly 48 hours straight. He drew from his childhood fantasies - an image of Douglas Fairbanks Sr. in "The Mark of Zorro," "The Bat," and a drawing of Leonardo da Vinci.

"As a kid I always was fascinated by the beginnings of things - the automobile, airplane, motion picture, comic strip. I loved the innovative stages." He was particularly fond of a book of Leonardo da Vinci's sketches of inventions - the steam engine, parachute, machine gun. One especially intrigued him. It was a man on a sled with the scalloped wings of a bat.

Kane's editor flipped for his Batman, and the ecstatic cartoonist was given a green light. He collaborated with a high school friend on scripts. Bill Finger, who died two years ago, stuck with him for 20 years. "He was the greatest, and a real advocate of the pulps. We'd get a giant prop like a Trojan horse, the Statue of Liberty. The picture would emanate from there, give us an idea for a story line. The idea of Batman fitting on top of these giant props was very effective."

At first Kane strove to create what he calls a mysterious mood ("Batman was sinister, almost vampiric, like Dracula"), but soon fashioned him as more superhero than dark figure of vengeance. He squared his jaw, shortened his ears, and made him smile ("he became more of a swashbuckler").

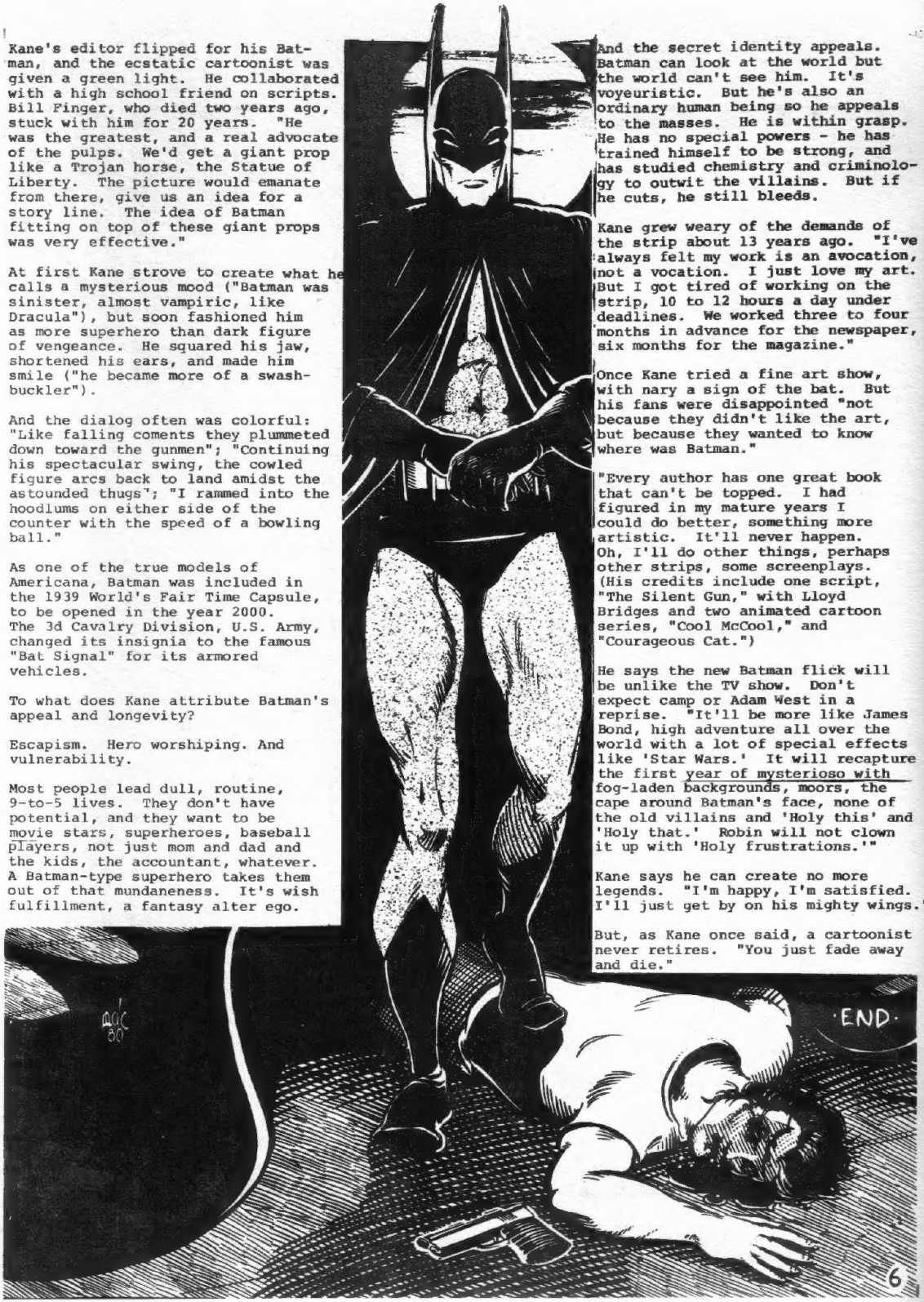
And the dialog often was colorful: "Like falling coments they plummeted down toward the gunmen"; "Continuing his spectacular swing, the cowled figure arcs back to land amidst the astounded thugs"; "I rammed into the hoodlums on either side of the counter with the speed of a bowling ball."

As one of the true models of Americana, Batman was included in the 1939 World's Fair Time Capsule, to be opened in the year 2000. The 3d Cavalry Division, U.S. Army, changed its insignia to the famous "Bat Signal" for its armored vehicles.

To what does Kane attribute Batman's appeal and longevity?

Escapism. Hero worshiping. And vulnerability.

Most people lead dull, routine, 9-to-5 lives. They don't have potential, and they want to be movie stars, superheroes, baseball players, not just mom and dad and the kids, the accountant, whatever. A Batman-type superhero takes them out of that mundaneness. It's wish fulfillment, a fantasy alter ego.



And the secret identity appeals. Batman can look at the world but the world can't see him. It's voyeuristic. But he's also an ordinary human being so he appeals to the masses. He is within grasp. He has no special powers - he has trained himself to be strong, and has studied chemistry and criminology to outwit the villains. But if he cuts, he still bleeds.

Kane grew weary of the demands of the strip about 13 years ago. "I've always felt my work is an avocation, not a vocation. I just love my art. But I got tired of working on the strip, 10 to 12 hours a day under deadlines. We worked three to four months in advance for the newspaper, six months for the magazine."

Once Kane tried a fine art show, with nary a sign of the bat. But his fans were disappointed "not because they didn't like the art, but because they wanted to know where was Batman."

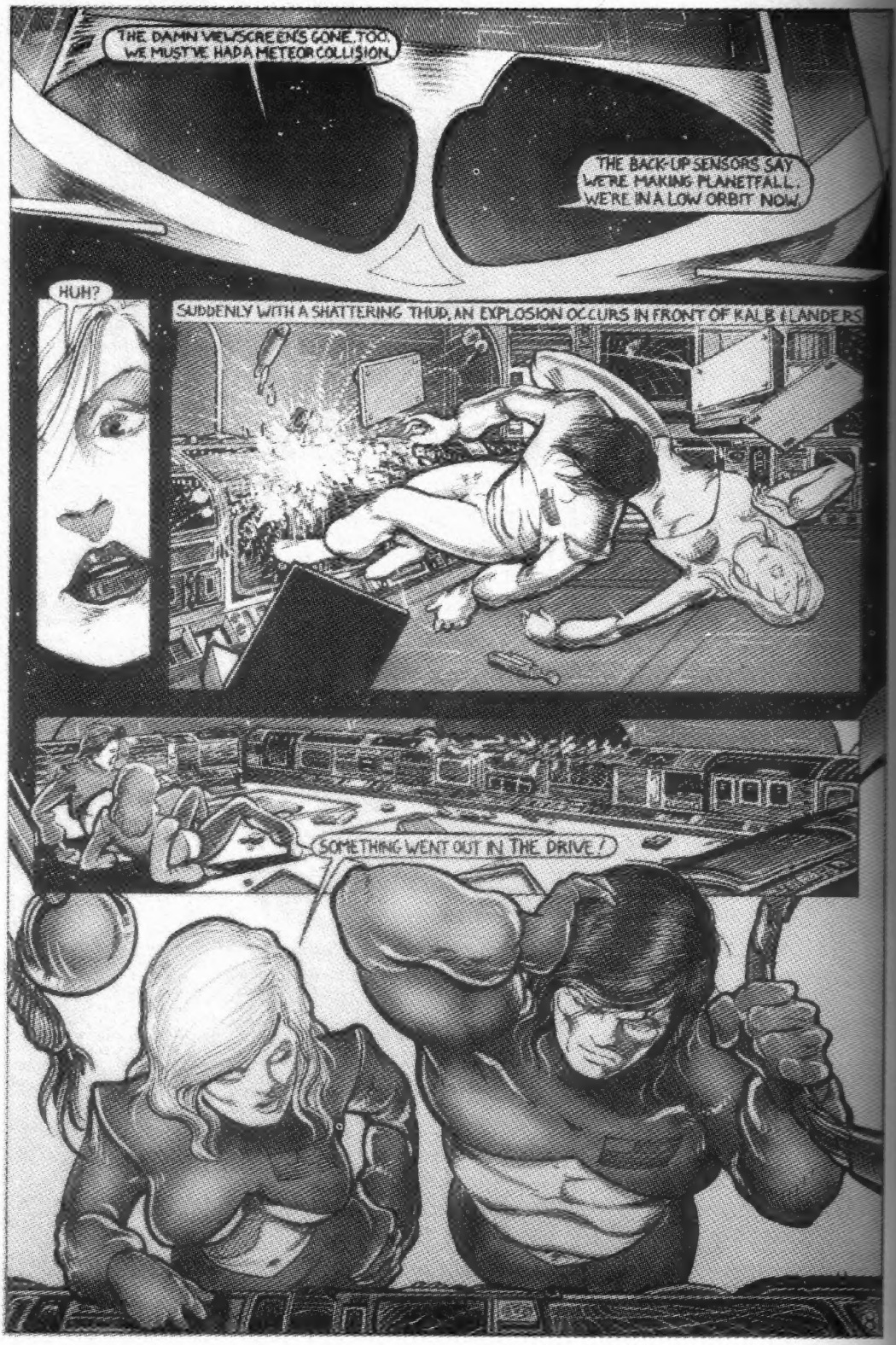
"Every author has one great book that can't be topped. I had figured in my mature years I could do better, something more artistic. It'll never happen. Oh, I'll do other things, perhaps other strips, some screenplays. (His credits include one script, "The Silent Gun," with Lloyd Bridges and two animated cartoon series, "Cool McCool," and "Courageous Cat.")

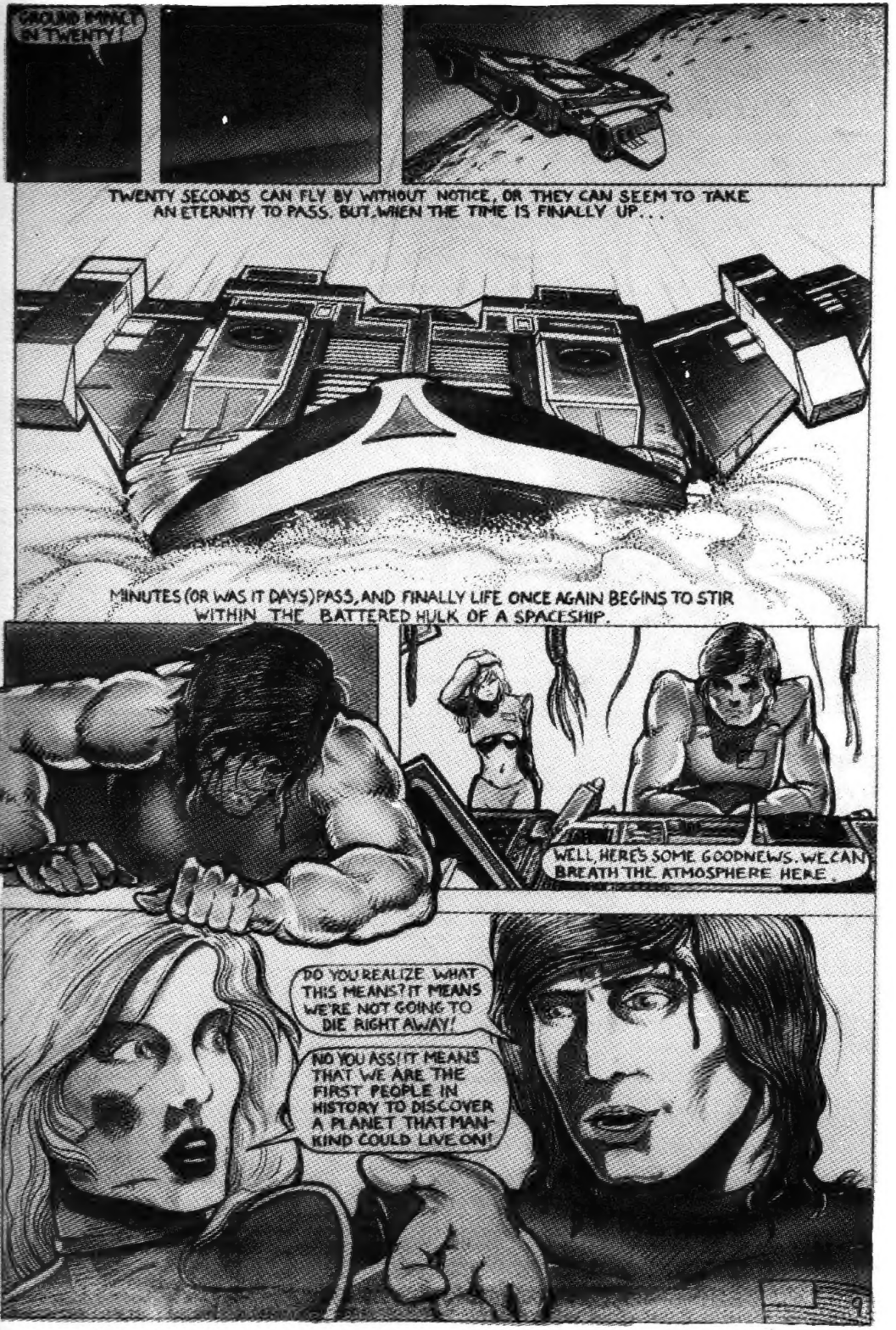
He says the new Batman flick will be unlike the TV show. Don't expect camp or Adam West in a reprise. "It'll be more like James Bond, high adventure all over the world with a lot of special effects like 'Star Wars.' It will recapture the first year of mysterioso with fog-laden backgrounds, moors, the cape around Batman's face, none of the old villains and 'Holy this' and 'Holy that.' Robin will not clown it up with 'Holy frustrations.'"

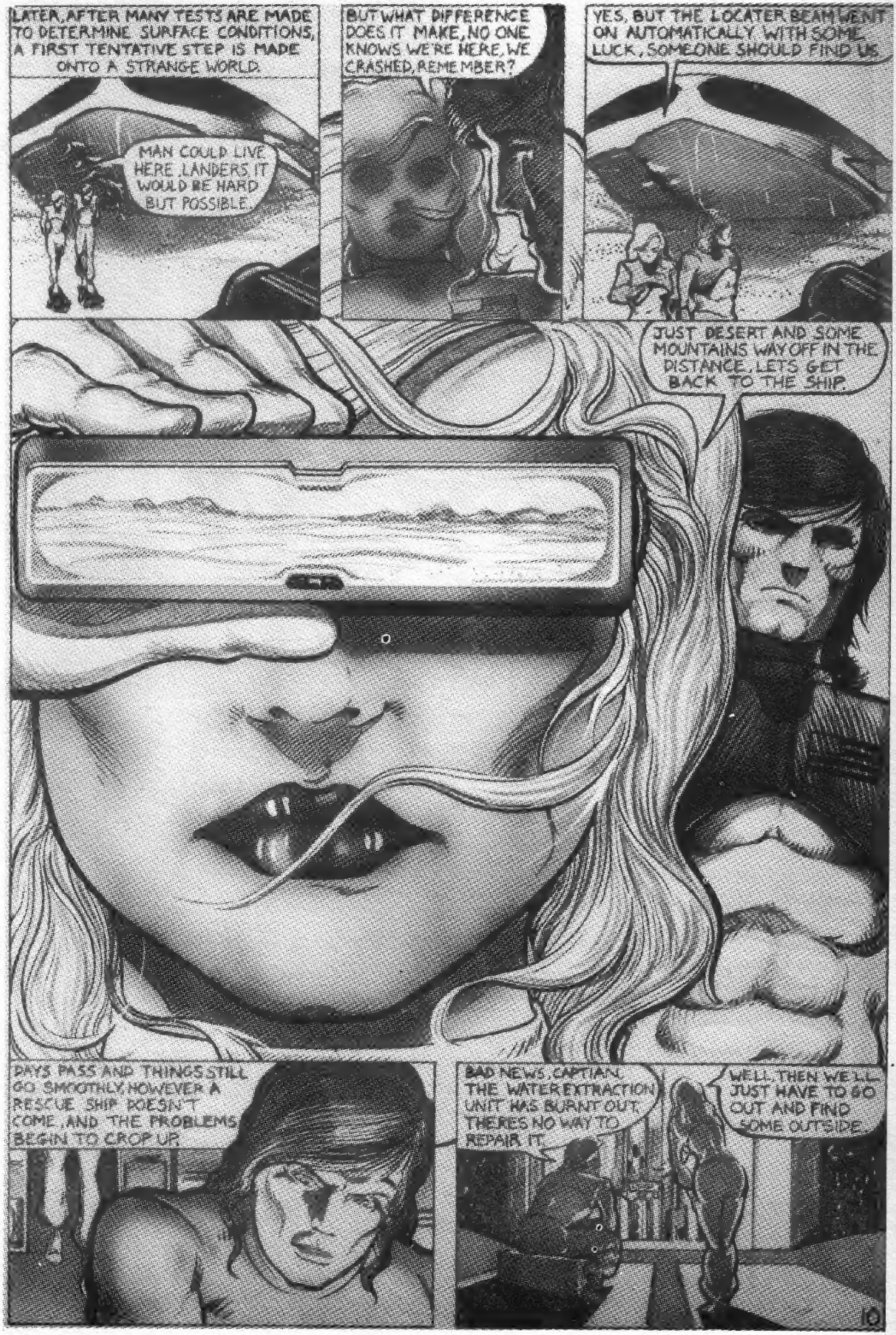
Kane says he can create no more legends. "I'm happy, I'm satisfied. I'll just get by on his mighty wings."

But, as Kane once said, a cartoonist never retires. "You just fade away and die."

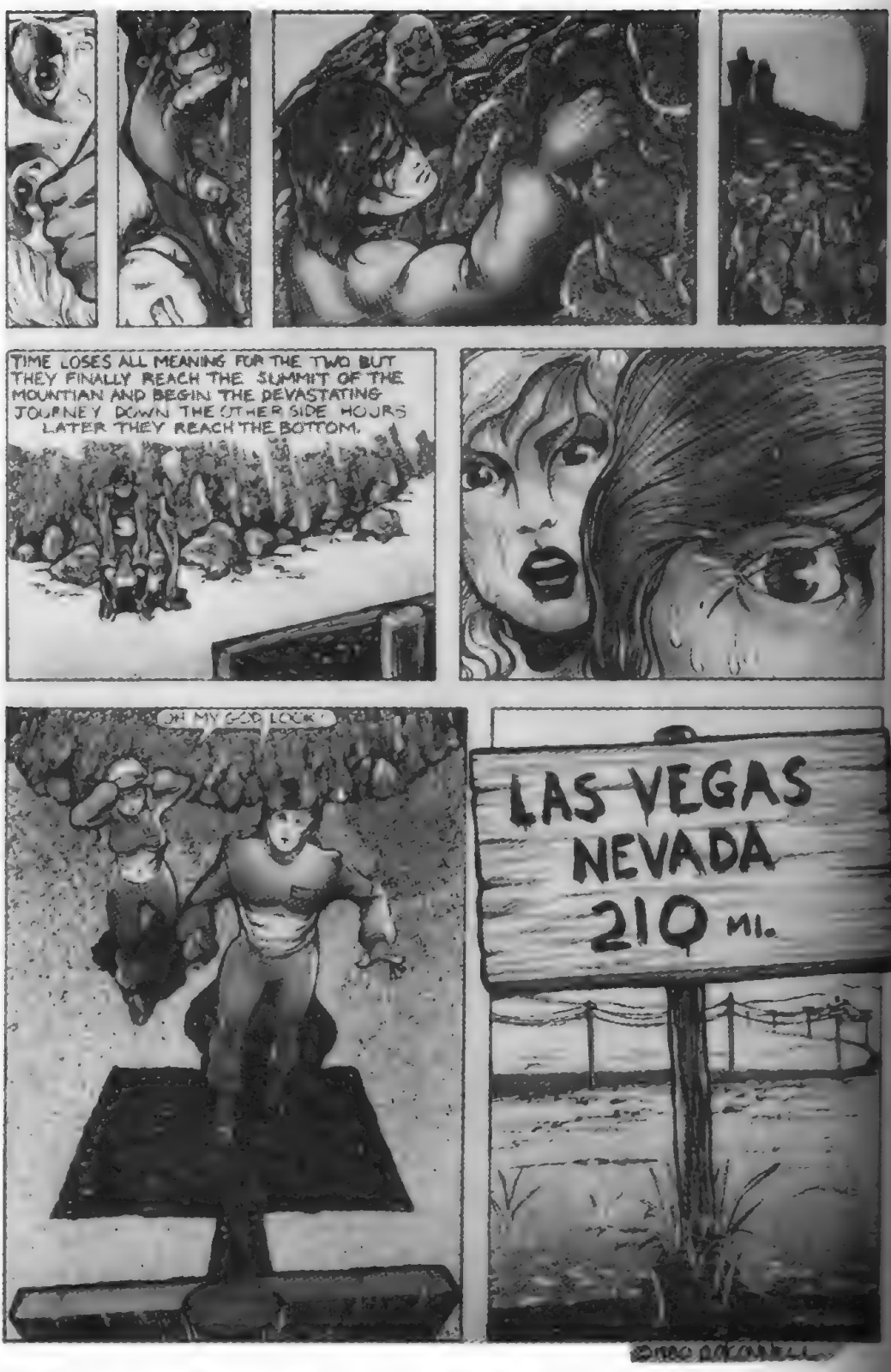
SPACE: THAT ENDLESS BLACK VELVET WHERE
MEN ARE CONSTANTLY TRYING TO
FIND ANSWERS TO A MYRIAD OF
QUESTIONS. SOME QUESTIONS, HOW-
EVER, SHOULD BE LEFT
UNANSWERED.
THE VOYAGERS
STORY: RON CLARK
THE REST: MITCH O'CONNELL
INSIDE THE SILENT METAL OBJECT LIE TWO PEOPLE IN TRANSPARENT COFFINS.
CAPTIAN KALB, I THINK SOMETHINGS WRONG.
OH REALLY LANDERS?! I THOUGHT THE STATUS BOARD LIT UP RED BECAUSE IT WAS CHRISTMAS. LETS GET TO THE CONTROL DOME.
I CHECKED THE TELLTALES ON THE WAY IN. THE FORWARD SENSORS ARE BLOWN.


THE DAMN VIEWSCREEN'S GONE, TOO. WE MUST'VE HAD A METEOR COLLISION.
THE BACK-UP SENSORS SAY WE'RE MAKING PLANETFALL. WE'RE IN A LOW ORBIT NOW.
HUH?
SUDDENLY WITH A SHATTERING THUD, AN EXPLOSION OCCURS IN FRONT OF KALB & LANDERS
SOMETHING WENT OUT IN THE DRIVE!


GROUND IMPACT IN TWENTY!
TWENTY SECONDS CAN FLY BY WITHOUT NOTICE, OR THEY CAN SEEM TO TAKE AN ETERNITY TO PASS. BUT, WHEN THE TIME IS FINALLY UP...
MINUTES (OR WAS IT DAYS) PASS, AND FINALLY LIFE ONCE AGAIN BEGINS TO STIR WITHIN THE BATTERED HULK OF A SPACESHIP.
WELL, HERE'S SOME GOODNEWS. WE CAN BREATH THE ATMOSPHERE HERE.
DO YOU REALIZE WHAT THIS MEANS? IT MEANS WE'RE NOT GOING TO DIE RIGHT AWAY!
NO YOU ASS! IT MEANS THAT WE ARE THE FIRST PEOPLE IN HISTORY TO DISCOVER A PLANET THAT MANKIND COULD LIVE ON!


LATER, AFTER MANY TESTS ARE MADE TO DETERMINE SURFACE CONDITIONS, A FIRST TENTATIVE STEP IS MADE ONTO A STRANGE WORLD.
MAN COULD LIVE HERE, LANDERS, IT WOULD BE HARD BUT POSSIBLE.
BUT WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE, NO ONE KNOWS WE'RE HERE, WE CRASHED, REMEMBER?
YES, BUT THE LOCATER BEAM WENT ON AUTOMATICALLY WITH SOME LUCK, SOMEONE SHOULD FIND US.
JUST DESERT AND SOME MOUNTAINS WAY OFF IN THE DISTANCE, LETS GET BACK TO THE SHIP.
DAYS PASS AND THINGS STILL GO SMOOTHLY, HOWEVER A RESCUE SHIP DOESN'T COME, AND THE PROBLEMS BEGIN TO CROP UP.
BAD NEWS, CAPTIAN. THE WATER EXTRACTION UNIT HAS BURNT OUT. THERES NO WAY TO REPAIR IT.
WELL, THEN WE'LL JUST HAVE TO GO OUT AND FIND SOME OUTSIDE.

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING THEY LEAVE THE SHIP TO FIND WATER.
GOD, THERE GOES THE LOCATER! WE'RE OUT ON OUR OWN NOW!
THE SUN BEATS DOWN ON THEM AND SOON BECOMES THEIR ENEMY. THEY SHOWER CURSES ON IT BUT IT STILL SHINES ON UNMERCIFULLY.
CAPT'N, THIS IS A WILD GOOSE CHASE THERE'S NO SURFACE WATER FOR HUNDREDS OF MILES, PROBABLY
WE'RE ALMOST TO THE MOUNTAINS, MAYBE T-THERE


TIME LOSES ALL MEANING FOR THE TWO BUT THEY FINALLY REACH THE SUMMIT OF THE MOUNTIAN AND BEGIN THE DEVASTATING JOURNEY DOWN THE OTHER SIDE HOURS LATER THEY REACH THE BOTTOM.
OH MY GOD LOOK!
LAS VEGAS
NEVADA
210 MI.

THE FICTION HOUSE ARTISTS by SUSAN LATTANZIO

The years from 1940-1954 saw the rise and fall of a line of comics that were a much-needed alternative to the recent superhero trend. Some of the best artists of the day contributed their talents to the adventure-oriented series of comic books published by Fiction House. In the 20's, Fiction House was doing well as a publisher of pulp fiction, but due to the depression, almost all titles were cancelled by 1932. Several years later, when comic books were coming into popularity, Fiction House decided to get involved. It published a black and white edition titled Jumbo Comics that featured "The Hawk" by Will Eisner as well as several other new characters.

Not able to compete on the superhero line due to the appearance of Superman and Batman in 1939 and Captain Marvel in 1940, Fiction House set up a series of single-theme magazines with adventure rather than superhero stories. These comics: Fight, Jumbo, Jungle, Planet, and Wings, contained illustrated versions of previously published pulp fiction stories and boasted some of the best artists of the period.

The Fiction House artwork was handled almost entirely by the S. M. Iger Studio, whose roster included such names as Will Eisner, Lou Fine, Al Feldstein, Reed Crandall, and John Celardo. Samuel Maxuel Iger, along with Will Eisner, formed the studio in 1937. He had created the character of Sheena the Jungle Girl back in the early 30's while working at Editor's Press Service, and he used her in the first issue of Jumbo as a back-up feature. Unfortunately, the comic didn't do very well, and in issues 9 and 10 some important changes were made. First, Jumbo was converted to full color; second the character of Sheena was elevated from a "damsel-in-distress" role to that of a jungle heroine. Good girl art was becoming popular and it soon became an integral part of all the Fiction House magazines.

One of the first "Sheena" artists was Mort Meskin. Like many later F.H. artists, Meskin studied at the Art Students League and then went on to join the S. M. Iger Studio. Noted for his cinematic style, Meskin's strip featured a scantily-clad Sheena cavorting around in a lush tropical jungle with her sidekick Bob. Sales rose and the magazine's main feature, "Stuart Taylor" by Curt David and Lou Fine, was eventually dropped. In 1938 Sheena became the "star" of Jumbo Comics as well as her own title later on in 1942.

Al Feldstein got his start in comics at the Iger Studio. There, from 1941-1946, he drew such strips as "Sheena" and "Kayo Kirby". After a period of Air Force Service during the war, Feldstein joined E.C. Comics in 1947 where his style of "static horror" became very popular.

Bob Lubbers attended the Art Students League and joined Fiction House in 1942. Noted for his rendering of the female figures, as well as action-packed adventure scenes, Lubbers worked on almost all the F. H. strips. He was a regular artist on "Captain Wings", "U.S. Rangers", "Rip Carson", and "Firehair", and served as Art Director from 1945-1950.

Lee Elias, Lubbers' successor on the "Captain Wings" feature, was one of the few artists who didn't get to Fiction House via the Iger shop. He started doing Wings in 1943, and until 1946 he also illustrated "Suicide Smith", "Firehair", and "Space Rangers". Most remembered for his work on "Captain Wings", Elias was an excellent airplane artist. While skilled at technical work, however, his anatomy lacked the maturity and voluptuousness of Lubbers'. Consequently, the strip began focusing more on aerial dog-fight scenes than good girl art.

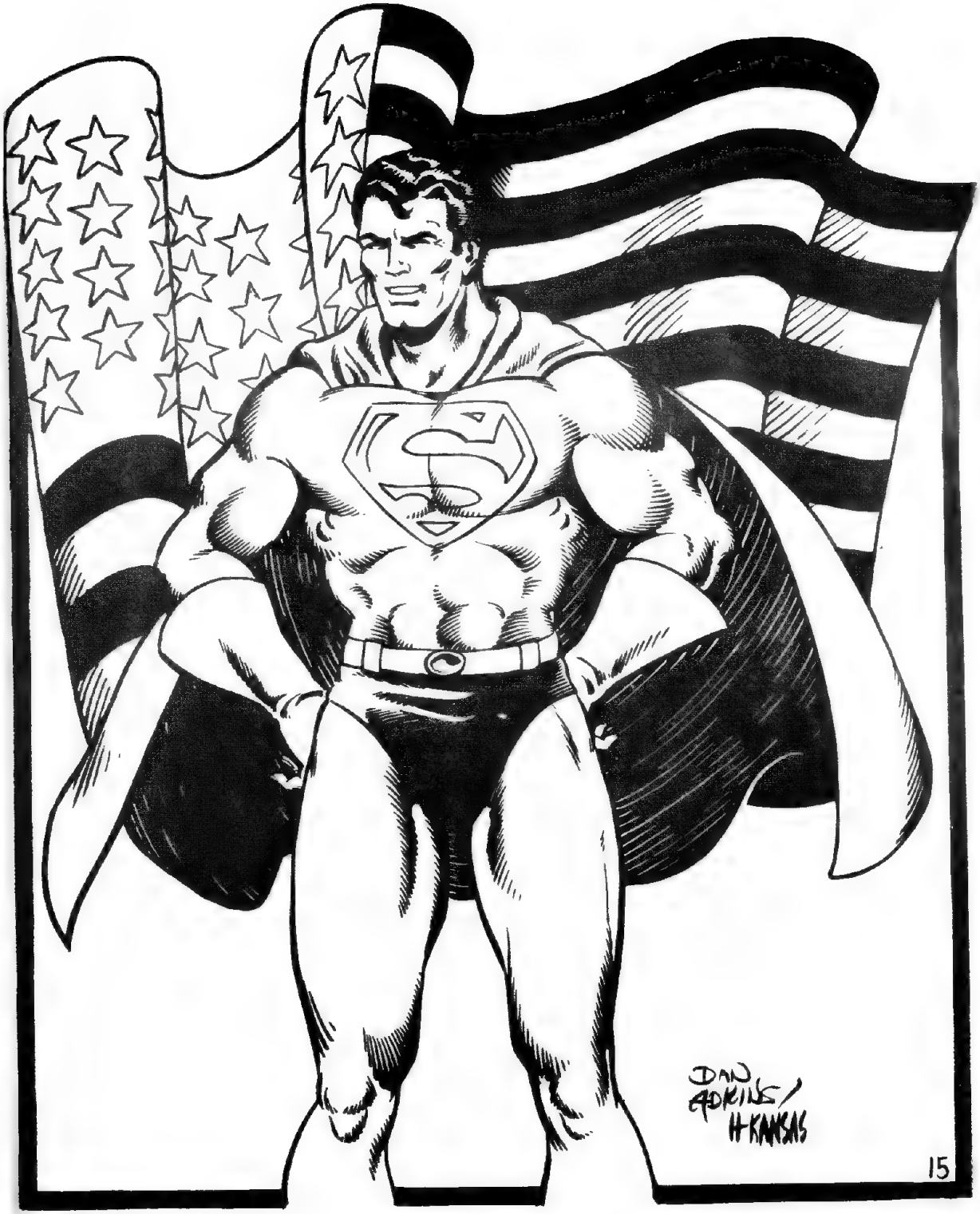
Another artist who made his start at Fiction House without the help of the Iger-Eisner shop was Murphy Anderson. In 1944, he began pencilling and inking several strips: "Suicide Smith" in 1944, "Sky Rangers" in 1946, and "Star Pirate" from 1944-1947. During this period, he also received his first writing assignment, a minor feature entitled "Life on Other Worlds". In 1947, Anderson left F.H. to take over the Buck Rogers syndicated strip. His fine-line illustrative work is considered among the best of the strip's art.

One more well-known name to emerge from the Art Students League and the Iger Studio was John Celardo. His work at Fiction House includes such strips as "The Hawk", "Red Comet", "Powerman", "Captain West", and "Kaanga". When WWII broke out, Celardo was drafted. After the war, he returned to F.H., where he worked on "Tiger-Man", "Suicide Smith", and others from 1946-1949. He later went on to succeed Bob Lubbers as artist for the Tarzan newspaper strip.

Other unsung Fiction House artists include Matt Baker, Artie Saar, Ruben Moreira and Mort Leav. Most of these men when on to other publishers and other strips, but in the beginning, these and other fine artists started their careers in the pages of Fiction House Comics.

·END·

"BLACK and WHITE DREAMS"


DAN
JOHNS/
H-KANSAS

MICHAEL CHEN, 7911.04

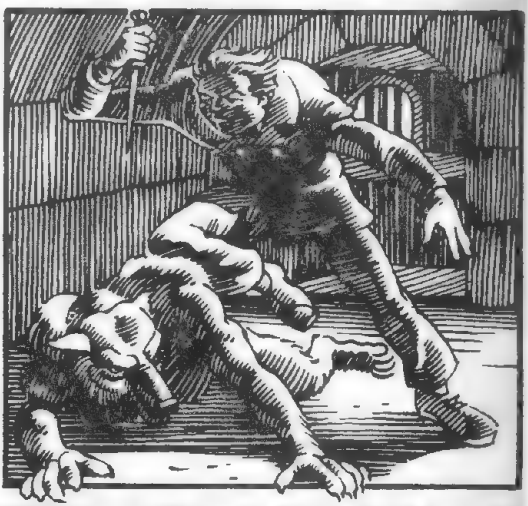
DAVE MILLER '80

CENTRAL EUROPE · 1847 ·
IT IS WELL YOU HAVE COME
AND AS I PROMISED, YOU SHALL BE HANDSOMELY PAID.
THE HAUNTING BEAST
R·LINDSEY·
COME!
YOU'LL USE THIS KNIFE. NOW FOLLOW ME.

KLIK
NOW SWIFTLY TAKE THIS AND KILL HIM!
NO! PLEASE STAY AWAY!
WWOOPRGG!!!
SSNAARRRLL!

SLISH!

THUD!



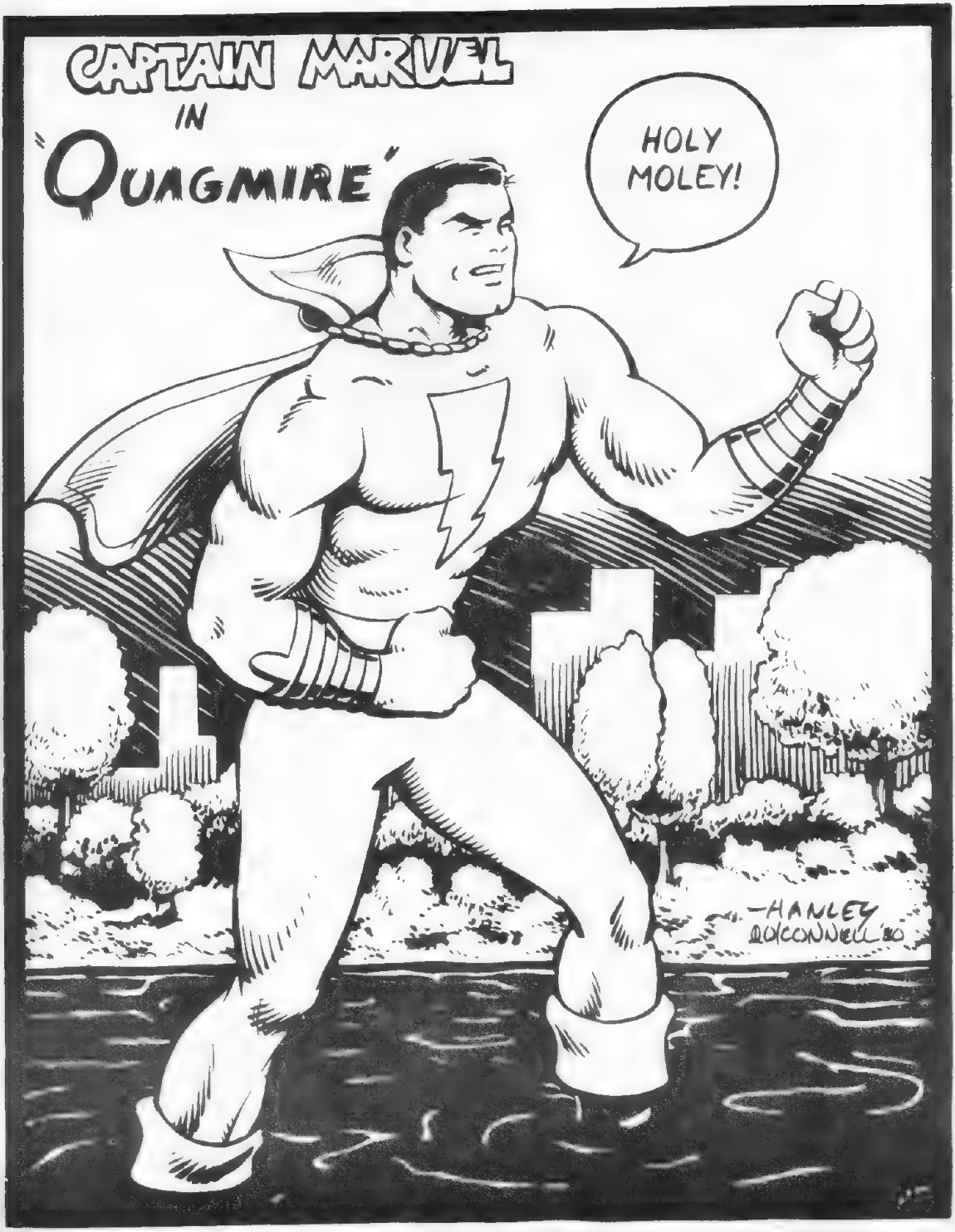
AAAKKK!

ARE THEY...?
HHOOWWLL!
RIP!
PERHAPS NEXT TIME THERE'LL BE NO WINNERS.
END

©MCMLXXIII CHARLTON PUBLISHING COMPANY

JOE STATON
E. Anderson

ERIC '80


CAPTAIN MARVEL
IN
"QUAGMIRE"
HOLY MOLEY!
HANLEY
DOCONNELL '80

It was my good fortune to be born in July, 1935 -- a few years earlier than Russ Cochran and a few years later than Bill Gaines, both of whom have had a profound influence on my enjoyment of life! I do not remember the first comic book I read, but it wasn't an EC; nevertheless, I remember that when I was younger I had a growing interest and awareness of the pleasure of reading comics. In those early days I was occupied with the superheroes: Captain Marvel, Superman, and two particular favorites - Torch and Toro. I followed the exploits of Plastic Man and Sheena along with Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, others, and of course the various friends and enemies that were woven into the plots of their stories. They were great, I thought, but at that time I had no idea of what was to come. A dime in the late 1940's could buy hours of reading and trading pleasure for someone who was approaching 15.

I remember those days with a fuzzy blur of impressions - the world at war, shortages, blacked-out car headlights, an occasional Navy blimp flying over the Rhode Island home where I spent, and still spend, summers and vacations - they were looking for enemy submarines off the coast. While we were at war, I was fighting the comic-book enemies; it was a good time, but my memories now are clearer on another subject - EC comics.

As distinctly as if it were yesterday, I recall buying my first EC comic. It was the start of their New Trend series, and, of course, my start of a love affair only a fellow "Fan-Addict" could understand. The issue was that classic first Weird Science with Al Feldstein's marvelous cover. Long before Russ Cochran or Bruce Hershenson's 12 EC reprints came into my life, and long, long after the comic itself was gone from my collections, I could quote word for word the "Good Lord, Karl..." text from the cover and much of what followed. Such is my love for EC - then and now. The words are somewhat rusty now, but the excitement - well, that's more than ever.

This all started in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on a cloudy day as I walked along the famous Boardwalk. I passed a stationary/cigar store (the kind I knew sold comics), went back to find a row of my old (then) favorites lined up against one wall on the bottom shelf. I glanced over the titles, looking for new issues - I thought I might enjoy a few issues while spending the school vacation away from home (New York). After a few minutes of poking amidst the known quantities, I discovered something new - a magazine that looked more like just that than a typical, ordinary comic book. "Weird Science"? I wondered about the name, almost put it back, then decided to give it a try. It did look interesting, and at that time I was beginning to follow Astounding's science fiction stories. I had read enough science fiction and fantasy to pay my dime for this comic rather than something else. It was one of the more intelligent decisions of my life.

The vacation was not the same afterwards. I had become unknowingly hoocked on EC.

During the following days I read and re-read that Weird Science and even interested my parents to do the same. They said they liked it; you know I did! It was something special, something to be saved, and I wondered then if I'd been missing something - after all, it appeared to be the 12th in a series, based on that # on the cover. I admit that I'd never heard of EC, nor had I read "Saddle Romances" or any of the pre-trend issues they had put out. Of course, now I understand the Post Office mailing rules for consecutively-numbered things, but for many years I was puzzled by the numbering-system Bill Gaines and his associated used.

As time passed I faded out my Marvel & Dell, etc., searched and bought only the growing line of EC's. The Old Witch has replaced Donald Duck, and the Crypt-Keeper, the superheroes. At this point I was away at school in New Hampshire and had continuing subscriptions to the whole line. If I could get away from school, even for a few hours, I haunted two newsstands in the nearest town (Concord) for EC's. By having an extra copy on hand, the one waiting for me at home could remain virtually untouched - a practice I was to continue for the next few years. I still read a few other comic books at the time, but mainly to see how they were starting to copy the marvelous EC style.

My mother wrote dutifully to tell me what EC's had come during the past week. "A Vault of Horror came today", she would write, "with a horrible cover." Those were the days. I spent hours

thinking about what that cover might be until I got into town, or home, to see it for myself. Needless to say, I was never disappointed.

If the first turning point in my love-affair with EC was the early, exciting discovery of the golden nugget of Weird Science #12, which opened channels to the rich lode to be discovered later on, the second golden treasure of discovery was when I persuaded my ever-patient father to take me in a taxi one afternoon, totally unannounced, to a downtown New York address neither of us had ever been to before: 225 Lafayette Street. The sole purpose of the trip was to buy a first edition (#1) of EC's then-latest publication: Shock SuspenStories - the issue with Al Feldstein's electric-chair sequence on the cover under a large, bright blue banner announcing the name of this new publication. I had been unable to locate this issue on any newsstand; sending in my check for 75¢ for the next six issues, then waiting months for the second issue to arrive - well, that would never do.

We arrived at 225 Lafayette Street and at the hallowed doorway of room 706 - the offices of the Entertaining Comics Company. We entered, my father leading the way. I peered into every corner, trying to see all I could in those first few minutes. It was a little like opening a Christmas stocking; you knew it was full of good things and you couldn't decide what to open first.

Frank Lee, cigar in his mouth, rose from his desk near the door to greet us. Hanging on a nearby wall were covers of Weird Fantasy, The Haunt of Fear, Crime SuspenStories, and others - including the Shock #1 I'd come to buy. As I took all this in, we were gently shepherded into an inner room where a large man sat comfortably behind an even larger desk cluttered with papers and a wheel of assorted rubber stamps. He rose, smiled, extended his hand and welcomed us - me, wide-eyed with the fascination of being in a very special place, and my father, wondering what this was all about. I met Bill Gaines for the first time.

In the minutes that followed, we talked of publishing, of EC comics (naturally), and of Ray Bradbury and his work, which we both appreciated. By that time, EC had adapted various stores of his under the headline of "America's Top Horror Writer". The fact that Ray Bradbury wrote good horror stories, as well as his poetic and beautiful science fiction tales, was something of a revelation to me. I learned at that meeting of the Arkham House publication of his Dark Carnival and I managed, a few weeks later, to acquire a copy, much to my delight - then and now.

Bill GAines was quick to produce a copy of Shock SuspenStories #1 when he heard that was the main reason for my visit. Al Feldstein authographed a print of his cover of Weird Science #11, which was due out shortly. This is one of my special treasures in my EC files.

That afternoon, we had to go somewhere else before going home; I'd put my Shock SuspenStories in my father's briefcase, along with Al's autographed cover copy, in hopes they would be safe there, uncreased. We were in a hurry and in the confusion of rushing here and there, my father left his briefcase in the taxi. I was crushed. A strange man, with an unpronounceable name, in an undistinctively yellow taxi, was driving off with my most precious possessions! Given all the issues of Shock available (and they weren't), none could replace that particular issue. It was given to me from the hand of Bill Gaines himself. Could anything be more special? And of course, how could one ever replace an Al Feldstein authographed cover? My father, worried over the loss of his business papers, called the police. This story has a happy ending: in less than 24 hours everything was recovered from a lost-items office. By my keen-eyed judgment, it appeared that neither the taxi driver nor the passenger who discovered the missing briefcase had touched or read my comic - that was important. I felt the weight of years rising off my shoulders; it was great!

A few years later I was asked to write a brief article about EC (which earned me no particular fame or glory, although as late as 1979 people still referred to it as one of the first of its kind), so I did. It was a brief piece, not well-written I admit, but it appeared in the first issue of the EC Fan Bulletin, a mimeographed fanzine of the period that lasted some two issues. I have xerox copies of each now, but had to pay up for them - my original of #1 was sent years later to Rich Mauser, editor of the 5-issue Spa Fon.

After my first visit to the EC offices, I had the pleasure of other visits there from time to time and met other people - the artists, once in a while. I never did meet Wally Wood, my favorite, but Al Williamson was there once, and that was fun. There were others, but to this day, I don't recall who they were! What fantastic talent EC was blessed with - most of all, Al Feldstein, a jack of many trades!

In the years to follow, Bill Gaines and I remained good friends; I never saw him often enough and sometimes for years at a time I didn't seem him at all. But whenever we met, the time in between is erased. I believe that, with only a few exceptions, this is one of the longest-standing friendships I have maintained over nearly three-quarters of my life. Bill is a wonderful, generous, warm, sincere, and genuine human being.

I wrote to the EC offices from time to time between visits, often to say how great their stories were - excerpts from some of my letters were printed, much to my delight. A comment in one of the earlier Shock SuspenStories, about how much good I thought "The Patriots" (Shock #2 by Jack Davis) would do for the American public, brought a response six months later from a 14-year old girl in Manila, the Phillipines, named Araceli de la Cruz, who had read my name and the Watch Hill, R.I. address, and wrote, asking me to be a pen-pal. I never wrote back to her - I don't know why, except that she was younger and I guess I was either busy or lazy. All these many, long years I have remembered her letter and wished I had written back. It could have been a fascinating, distant EC contact. If nothing else, at least it was interesting to learn that EC had more than just local circulation in those days - which I wasn't aware of.

At the peak of my interest came the crunch: the so-called "Comics Code" was established and the world that I was so happily wrapped up in started to fall apart. With my father's support and guidance, we wrote in EC's favor (freedom of the press, etc.) to the various Commissions and all that were rising up against the tide. It was a period of chaos: Dr. Frederic Wertham's Seduction of the Innocent came out; Bill Gaines testified before the Senate; and soon afterwards EC put out "IN MEMORIAM" notices for the titles in their New Trend series. It looked like the beginning of the end...

Let's return to the period before this for a little while. Being a devoted fan of all that Gaines & Associates produced, and having

been involved so intimately for what seemed so long, it was a natural progression that one evening I asked both Bill and Al up to my parent's apartment at the end of their workday. We all had a great time; Bill still talks of that visit. I proudly showed them my EC collection, all mint-condition, unread copies in a glass case in my room, stacked in alphabetical piles with the most current edition of each comic book on top. As there were some issues missing, they generously furnished me with the New Trend issues I didn't have. This made my collection at the time (apparently) one of the largest private EC collections in the USA. If I had it today for sale as one item, and if I were to sell it, I could probably retire on the proceeds and finance college educations for all six

daughters we have been blessed with in the past 16 years. This is speculation - I no longer have the collection, and if I did, it would not be for sale even at the highest price! As far as pre-Trend issues, I have acquired a few in the past year, but only owned one (Moon Girl) then - I bought it for $4, thinking that was a pretty high price to pay - it was then. Now, of course, the value of a good issue is ten times as much, or more.

This would be a good place to note that once I was the proud and lucky owner of a very rare set of EC cufflinks - Bill bestowed these on me on one of my last visits to 225 Lafayette Street - the others had been given out to the EC staff and artists in honor of a celebration. Even though I don't now own these either, I will never forget them. Rich Hauser, editor of Spa Fon, has them now, I hope, as I sent them to him years ago. Perhaps he will read this someday and let me know they are still safe in his possession. These cufflinks, a golf circle around the EC logo, were very beautiful.

Returning to the Senate hearings, note that while all this was happening, and later on during the rigors of meeting the standards of the "Code" requirements, my life continued. I was growing out of my teenage years, madly in love (still am), and deeply involved in other cares of the day: graduating, facing the draft or the alternatives (I chose the 6 month Army program), and summer work far from home and family (working on a survey team above and down in a potash mine in Carlsbad, New Mexico).

My experience was, it appears, not all all unusual - the pressure started, first from my fiance, then my parents (more subdued, but pressure, nevertheless), and my grandfather, too, to "do something" about my comics (sneer) before I got married. All this came as I approached the ripe age of 23, with my Army active-duty behind me, planning to be married in September 1958, with a banking career ahead of me. EC was forced by these circumstances to take a lesser part in my life. It was not my choice, believe me, but one dreadful night I sat up for hours, almost til dawn, destroying my entire collection. My illogical reasoning at the time, and under pressure to do this and that, was that if I couldn't own them, nobody else could either! They had value then - perhaps far, far less than they would command now - but how was I to know that at that time? In a short span, only memories, a few original Weird Science editions, and cutouts of the Ray Bradbury adaptations remained. It was a happy time, tinged with this sadness and the parting of these old friends. But I was far too busy getting a new phase of my life in order to feel the great loss I feel as I write this.

The years following can be compressed into short spurts of memories: the Army, marriage, employment at the Bank of New York, then (and now) employment with The Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States, six daughters (aged 2, 4, 6, 8, 14 & 16 at this date), and a move from New York City here to Greenwich, Connecticut, where we have all settled down for nearly six years. Also during this period, mostly in the last half dozen years, I have used my memories of the best of the EC stories as springboards for my imagination and have produced no less than 40 short, unpublished stories - horror, science-fiction, and fantasy principally. These are original tales, but I think the feeling of growing suspense or fear in them can only be related to the stories, not the plots, that made so much of my life special in the 1950s.

During those years, and then on into the 1970s when I started to get a whiff of the revival current that a new "second generation" of fans (and some old, first-generation fans like Russ Cochran) were bringing along, I remained in distant, but constant, touch with Bill Gaines. It was a dormant relationship too much of the time, I'm sorry to say. While employed at the Bank of New York I added my name, gladly, to their annual Christmas card sent by one of the officers in a different branch who had had some on-going relationship with Bill. At least it was a way to say hello, even

if it always seemd I was too busy to drop in on him at the new, uptown MAD Magazine offices at 485 Madison Avenue, near 52nd Street (Room 1300). Finally one afternoon when my plans for calling on Bank customers located near the MAD offices worked out, I came "back home to EC" and was as warmly welcomed as if it were yesterday and not a number of years since I last called. Bill is that kind of person. He never forgets who really cares and I have always felt welcome dropping in. It's that kind of open and considerate feeling whenever a true fan pays a call, no matter how busy they are meeting deadlines and schedules. It was delightful to see Bill again - now well bearded whereas I only knew him previously as clean-shaven - and he autographed and handed me copies of two great books: The EC Horror Library of

the 1950s and The MAD World of William M. Gaines. I also learned then of the plans to publish (in the original form) the series of EC's that ended after the 12th edition due to the rise in publishing costs; sad as it was at the time, it did pave the way for me to hear from Russ Cochran, who had taken my name off an "East Coast Comix" mailing list.

The EC cufflinks: what was the story here? In mid-1969 I received a letter from Rich Hauser describing his efforts to produce a fanzine for EC fans to be entitled "Spa Fon". (I'm not going to cover the origin of those words - see your earlier Weird Science reprints or originals if you have them for this expression, as well as "Squa Tront", which is even better known as an EC quality fanzine.) Rich talked of being a "second generation" EC fan, which touched my heart in a way only another EC Fan-Addict could understand. I suddenly felt very old, and full of memories. Here I was, being approached by a new generation of EC fans, asking what I could do for them. A week later I heard from Jerry Weist as well, the editor of Squa Tront. Both Rich and Jerry had received my name from Bill and decided to look me up. Luckily, I was still living in New York as our family hadn't grown to its present size and we could still fit into an apartment there at reasonable rent, so we were still listed conveniently in the Manhattan directory. By the time Jerry's courteous letter reached me, I had already sent Rich a few of my remaining EC treasures: a mint condition 3-D Tales of Terror, a few old fanzines, an uncolored copy of a Weird Science cover, and the cufflinks, and a long letter full of my thoughts and happiest memories. (This was in July 1969, just to target the time.) I asked Rich to share the letter I sent with Bill Gaines; he did, writing back a long, warm letter of great appreciation, promising to send a copy of Spa Fon #5 (I had copies of #2 & #3 then, and have since acquired xerox copies of #1, 2 and 5). Unfortunately, that was the last I heard from Rich, and still wait, eleven years later, for him to send that copy of #5 - we EC lovers are a persistent lot! I was in touch with Jerry Weist later, noting I had sent all I could on to Rich Hauser just a week earlier! In mid-1979, ten years later, I wrote to Jerry, received a quick reply, and bought a bunch of old fanzines, etc., from him for my collection.

Had I retained those special cufflinks, they would not have lasted the decade. We were burglarized in 1978 and all my jewelry was stolen and never recovered. I'm awfully glad those rare items are, or were, in the best possible hands.

Years passed. One day I was surprised to receive a letter from a "Russ Cochran". I wondered what this letter from West Plains, Missouri was all about, strongly suspecting it to be an appeal from a group of starving Midwest Indians looking for a contribution. I get a lot of peculiar solicitations, especially around Christmas. Even though this was in May 1978, I had no interest in opening the letter and circulated it into the pile of mail to be opened last, and most probably thrown away. It went under the bills received that day and sat unopened on the desk for two or three days.

When I finally figured out that neither the bills nor this strange letter were going to go away if left unopened, I worked my way down through the pile. You can't image how excited I was when I saw what this was all about...staring back to my wide-opened eyes were black-and-white miniature cover pictures of Weird Science that I had so loved and remembered all those years. I mailed my check for $40 within the hour and waited for months, with thousands of others, for those beautiful volumes to arrive. They did, weeks before we were to move from one house to another. I finally got a chance to read them months later, and they were more beautiful than I ever believed they could be!

Realizing that there were more things I had missed, I went back over the house ads in the 12 EC Reprints and then set forth on a quest to obtain copies of the 1972 Convention magazine EC Lives, etc. (This was done through the kindness of Jerry Weist), and on to other things, such as the six EC Portfolios, bought directly from Russ Cochran whom I was getting to know better through his collector's correspondence. About this same time, earlier in 1979, I passed a comic book store (Supersnipe Galleries) in New York and saw a copy of Squa Tront #8 in the window. That was a familiar name - I had sent for copies of #2 and 3 some years back and still had them tucked away in my basement, so I rushed in to buy it, soon afterwards obtaining copies of my missing issues from John Benson, current editor, and Jerry Weist. My collection was on the rise again and I was reliving the lost years, and the past years. It was the best of times.

I was surprised when I read my name in a few back issues of Squa Tront and in a letter later John noted that he thought I had been lost to the world of EC. This was more a case of having been passed by the time of time and not knowing all that had been quietly progressing while I was busy doing other things. I was so glad to learn that EC not only had not faded away (except for MAD) but was experiencing a strong revival with the aid of people like Jerry, Russ, and of course Bill Gaines, who was still involved. Through those days it has been a lot of rushing around, buying things, and turning up leads and references - one of the best being the Overstreet's Comic Book Price Guide, leading to my subscription to the Buyer's Guide newspaper of comic events and happenings. One thing has lead to another all along. Through these and other sources I have recently obtained a complete supply (except Shock #3) of Picto-fiction magazines (I had not heard of them when they first were out) and all of the Ballantine book reprints in mint condition, a large stack of MAD special and super-special issues and others. I could go on and on, but won't. Suffice it to say that I'm back again as much of a Fan-Addict as ever, loving every minute, and after 21 years of marriage, my wife (and most of my six daughters) still doesn't understand this!

As you now know, it's been my pleasure to call Bill Gaines my good friend for 30 years, and Russ Cochran the same. Since I started writing to him, every letter has been more full of praise than the last for all he is doing and all he will do in the future. I was the guest of Bill Gaines for dinner last month and Russ was in town then, making this special occasion complete. What an evening! It went on for hours, but never hours enough. We started off with steaks as an appetizer (in keeping with the comment in The MAD World of William M. Gaines that this is Bill's usual practice when dining out), and then moved on to 5 lb. lobsters he'd requested especially for the occasion. They were fabulous, tender and delicious, and were the biggest things I've ever seen, with claws the size of footballs, literally, and all else in equal proportions. Bill enjoyed various wines with this meal - he is an expert on the subject - and I enjoyed the great conversation between these giants of the comic-publishing field. I cannot tell you of all that I heard in confidence, but I can at least say that Russ' plans are great ones for years into the future, and if he does all that he hopes to, EC fandom will be enriched for the third and succeeding generations with wonderful treasures.

Russ, like Bill, is a large man, bearded, and as nice a person as one could have behind the revival movement of EC. He, like me, has never let go of the boy within the man; he knows the thrill of a special collection tucked away in a closet-box

where he can dig for hours into fantasies and horror stories, war tales, suspense and adventure. We both collected EC's in the 1950s and through him, we can collect them again. I feel blessed knowing these two men.

Finally, you might be interested in knowing what the present MAD offices are like. Once past the telephone operator/secretary, you are bussed into the inner sanctum, a few steps further inside, Bill Gaines sits behind a smaller wooden desk (or at least it appears smaller since this office is slightly smaller than the one at 225 Lafayette Street, and he is somewhat bigger) with a wheel of rubber stamps on it. To the right, completely covering a window is a large King Kong mask; hanging from the ceiling are models of blimps, zeppelins, and the like - he is fascinated by such things, as I suppose we all are. The office is cluttered with things, some of which have great meaning from the old days of the New Trend series - paintings of the Vault Keeper, Crypt Keeper and Old Witch, all of which, including one of Al Feldstein's paintings, have been on the covers of various issues of Squa Tront. Around the halls, Alfred E. Neuman grins down from various MAD covers; in the stockroom are hundreds of copies of pocket-book MAD issues and a clock that runs backwards with the one to the left of the twelve, etc. It is a crazy, delightful place - a den of true genius and originality, reflecting in all aspects the man behind this movement and the magazine's delightful way of looking at the world.

I hope you have enjoyed this article, my testament to my love for EC comics over the years and miles, none of which seem so distant now. I can pull out reprints of the first Weird Science (from both East Coast Comix and in the hardbound edition Russ put out) and remember back to the moment I have described earlier, when I bought the original issue. Hell, most days I can't tell you what I had for lunch by the time dinner is getting cold on the table. To remember buying one particular comic book 30 years later must mean more than a little something!

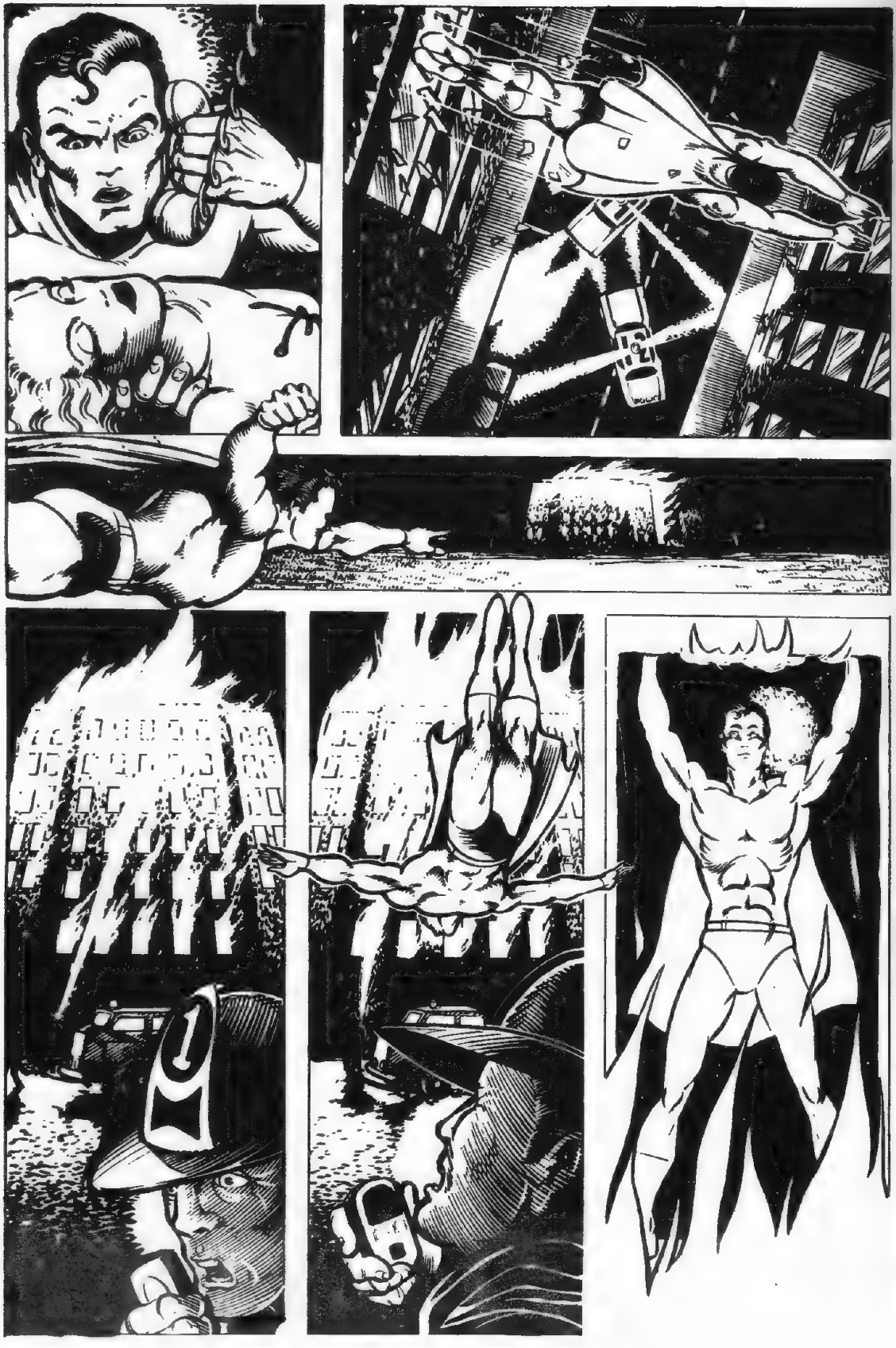
This article is really more like a series of comic-panels, looking back and forth into my life; turn pages and you turn time. Spot sentences at one point or another and you freeze action - I am a certain age, doing a certain thing. EC has been a delightful, meaningful, most enjoyable part of many panels of my life. There is no doubt or question in my mind that these are, and were, the best of any comics ever produced; who else had Al Feldstein both as a writer and artist? Could anyone create such a mood of space as Wally Wood, or of growing, oozing horror as Graham Ingels? Who can forget a Harvey Kurtzman war story, having once read it? I could go on and on for pages over appreciation for the artists. Russ asked me the other evening after dinner who were my favorite EC artists. It is hard to say, with so much talent to consider, but I would name Wood and Ingels certainly among the top choices.

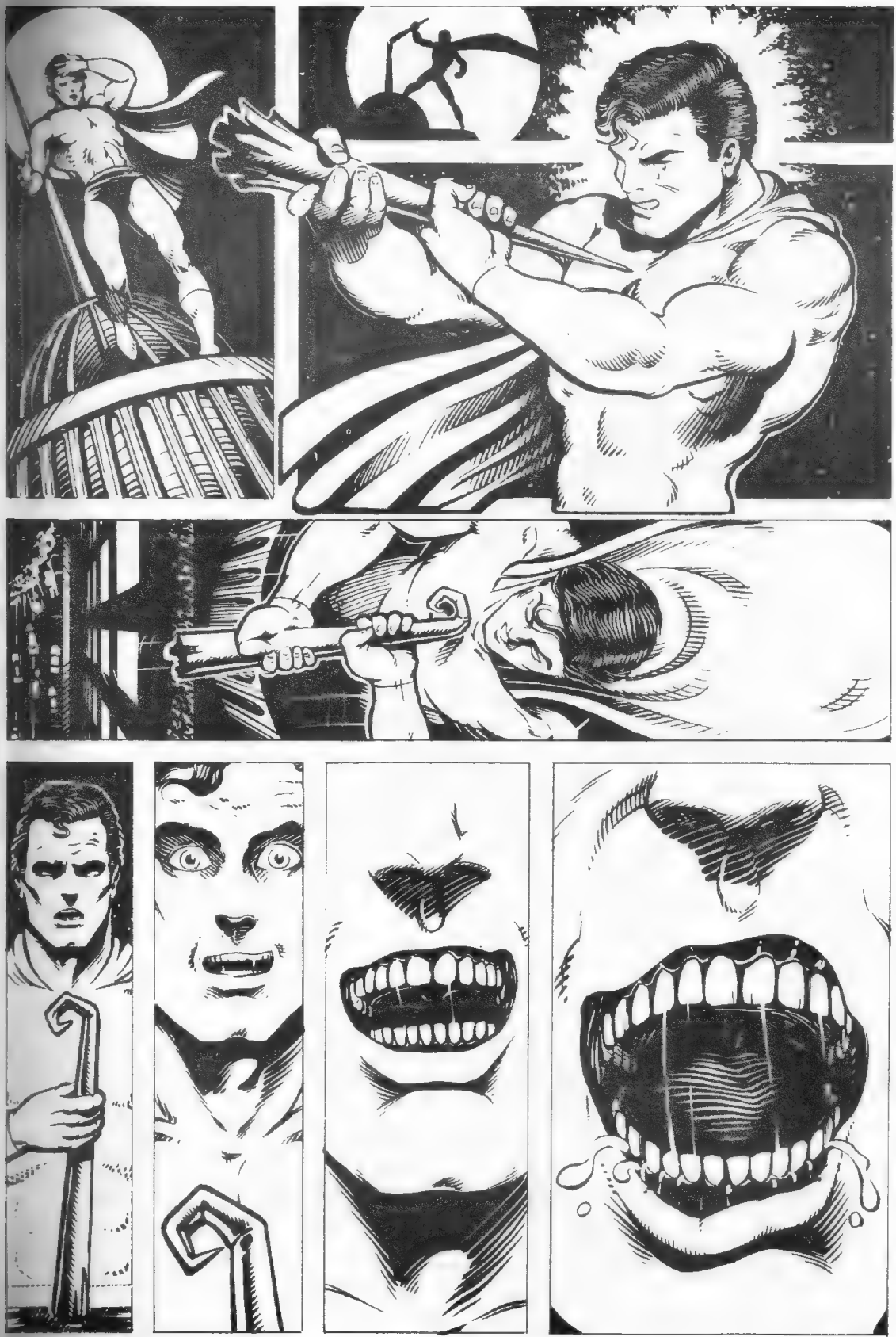
My paper is finished. My love for EC goes on! In this text I have told a series of really only personal impressions and glances into the past. I have loved writing it, as I love anything to do with ED. If my family thinks I'm a nut, a fellow collector will refer to me as a "Fan-Addict" and that says it all. Of course I am, I think to myself, and pleased to be a part of it. EC Lives? You bet it does! A Spa Fon and resounding Squa Tront to you all!

·END·

WRAY
19

THE SUPER-HERO

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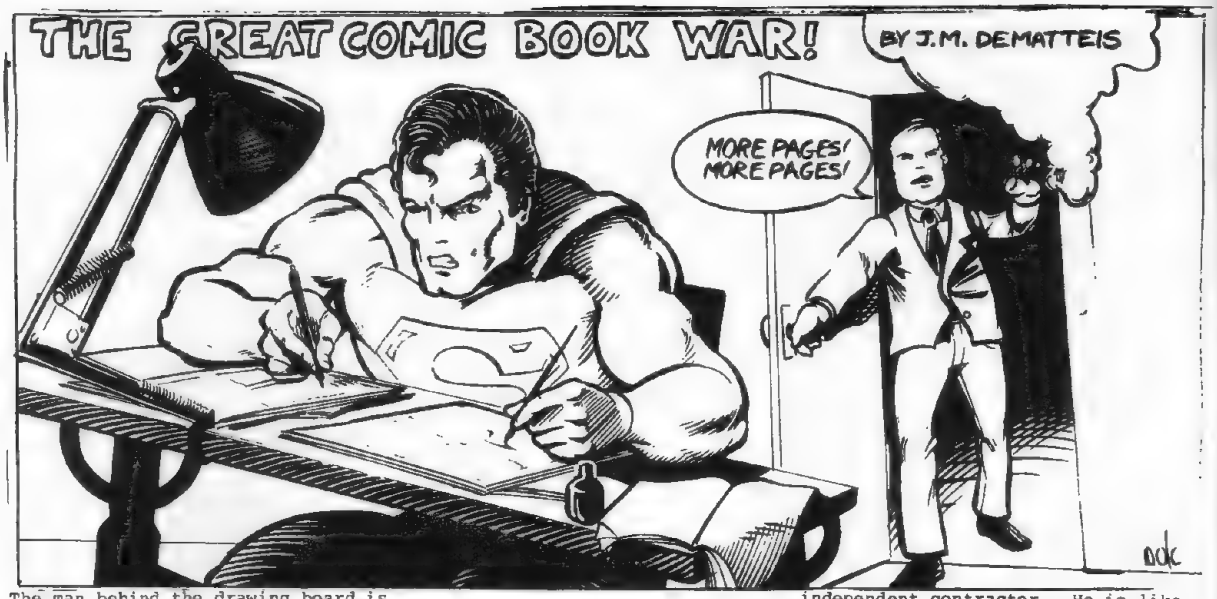
THE GREAT COMIC BOOK WAR!

BY J.M. DEMATTEIS



The man behind the drawing board is angry, but it's a cool anger, delivered subtly, without asperity - an anger born of knowledge. "A clerk at Marvel or DC Comics," he says, "has more privileges, has more rights, has more opportunities and has more financial remuneration than a freelancer who works for either company. A freelancer who creates the books that make it possible for Marvel and DC Comics to exist."

The speaker is award-winning artist Neal Adams, the man responsible for some of the most dazzling, mature, provocative comic books to emerge from Marvel or DC - like Green Lantern, Green Arrow, and Batman. He is also the rallying point behind the new Comics Guild - a fledgling organization created by and for the artists in the industry.

Since they exploded on the American scene in the Thirties - spearheaded by the appearance of DC's Superman, the grandfather of all modern superheroes - comic books have been considered a bastard industry; an industry that, on the one hand, can spawn successful movie and television projects like The Hulk or Superman - The Movie and, on the other, is treated like a trash heap, a quickie, cheapjack industry not worth the paper it's printed on.

Things seemed to be looking up in the Sixties when Stan Lee's Marvel Comics inspired a fresher, more adult approach to the form and brought an influx of young blood into the field. But, as the idealism of the Sixties melted into the pragmatism of the Seventies, these young artists and writers discovered the inequities that have existed in the business since the so-called golden age of the Thirties.

The final straw came early last year when both Marvel and DC, in response to the revised copyright laws, issued new contracts which specifically stated that all writers and artists must work on a work-made-for-hire basis. That is, creators relinquish all rights to their work to the companies and their parent corporations, Warner Communications (DC) and Cadence Industries (Marvel). Though this situation had, in effect, existed all along, the new contract brought all the hazy points into focus, pleasing those in management and incensing the artists. Especially Neal Adams.

Employes, But No Benefits

The work-made-for-hire contract is "the most unfair thing they've done since the took Superman from Siegal and Shuster," Adams says, working in his 48th Street Continuity Associates art studio. "Work-made-for-hire implies that the publisher is the creator of the material and that the artist or writer is merely an employe. If this were so, if the artist or writer were merely employes, then some wouldn't mind it, because they'd be getting the benefits of being employes. But they get no benefits. They get the short end of the stick in every category."

The idea of a guild for comic book artists and writers has been floating around the industry for some 20 years. An Academy of Comic Book Arts, which lasted from 1971 to 1975, fell apart due to lack of industry support. But, in Adams words, "The frustrations of the Academy made us aware of the fact that we needed a guild.

"The main purpose of the guild is to protect the rights and the financial future of the freelancer in the field. When I say freelancer, I specifically exclude employes who are protected by the law by the income tax and by social security. The freelancer is not protected by the law. He is an independent contractor. He is like the frontiersman. He is out there by himself and he has no one to protect him and no one to help him."

The goals of the guild, incorporated July 2, are already clear. Adams rattles them off: "The first thing we are shooting for is an increase in minimum rates. The second is to cause the artists and writers who participate in comic books on a freelance basis to participate in foreign rights. The third is to get a reasonable reprint rate. Right now the reprint rate is so unreasonable that it is silly. An artist only gets one-tenth of the original rate per reprinted page."

There are other major problems. Once an artist does a job for a company, his work can be freely taken and plastered over any product the company so choses, without the artist making one cent (the same goes for writers, whose stories can be taken and translated into other media).

Adams, whose work has been on everything from Batman games to Superman sheets without recompense, sees this as the ultimate outrage. "They took a drawing from the Superman vs. Muhammad Ali comic (done for DC Comics in 1978) and they gave that drawing to a person who makes fabrics That's my prize for doing a good job. Somebody else gets to use it. I don't get any money for it."

Adams shakes his head. "The people that do the best jobs get penalized by having their work used over and over again and not being paid for it. Ever. Isn't that nice? It could get you depressed."

Morality and Profits

Having been both starving freelancer (starting his professional career at the tender age of 12) and dread Man from Management, Marvel Comics Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter is in

an ideal position to discuss the alleged horrors that comic books companies have inflicted upon creative people. And he is no less vocal about it than Adams.

"I don't pretend to know whether it's morally right to work for someone for a salary and not participate in the fruits of his labor," he says "or whether it is morally wrong for someone to do a venture like comic books and not be somehow included in the profit-sharing. I am inclined to believe that if guys get together and they create something, they should share in the benefits. The company certainly has a right to share in it. They're putting up hundreds of thousands of dollars to publish it."

Morals aside, what really interests Shooter is the practical issue. "I think it's a clear and simple fact that the more incentive, the more participation a person has in a project, the more he'll give to it. If the people could be included - if there was some kind of relationship between the success of what they were doing and how much personal benefit they got - they'd probably do it better. So I think that, practically, it's good business sense to include as many people as you can in some kind of participational profit-sharing. That's reasonable."

But, Shooter insists, Marvel is well on the road to doing that anyway, regardless of Neal Adams and the guild. "Stan Lee has been pushing it for years and so has (Marvel president) Jim Galton. I have been in the presence of Stan and Galton talking to the Cadence big-wigs about that and arguing passionately in behalf of all the creative people. But you just can't discount the economic factor. So we're trying to do it in a sane, rational manner."

Neal Adams finds Shooter's words encouraging, but years of dealing with monolithic corporate structures have taken their toll. "It's really very nice that Jim Shooter and Jim Galton want to be our daddies, but we've had these daddies for 40 years and they haven't done all that well by us. They haven't taken care of us up to now and there is no reason to believe that they will take care of us at this point."

"We would like them to help us out," he adds. "I don't see any reason why we should assume that Jim Shooter and Jim Galton are bad guys. They're not bad guys. I think that Jim Shooter in particular is a sterling person. But the fact is that we've been behind the eight-ball for 40 years and it's about time we started fighting for ourselves."

Industry's Side

According to DC Comics editor and publicity director Jack C. Harris, that fight just might be fatal for the comic book industry - an economically frail business that has, in the past decade, depended more and more on the outside licensing of its characters for survival. "If you force the issue about getting more money," Harris says - a large picture of Christopher (Superman) Reeve peering over his shoulder - it's going to destroy the industry."

"If they bring the demand and shut us down and we go to Warners and say, 'Hey, they want all this money and we think they should get it,' Warners is going to say" 'But you're just publishing comic books! Good Lord! We're not gonna spend that kind of money on comic books! We've got a couple of movies we want to do, but we won't spend it on comic books. So we'll let you reprint and we'll license your characters out and thank you.' That's what will happen."

Adams argues that this reasoning has been used as a weapon against every labor organization that ever existed. "They say" 'If your demands become too high you can destroy our industry.' The fact is that if the engravers want more money, if the printers want more money, DC and Marvel Comics will give it to them - magically. The way they'll come up with the money is by raising the price of the comic books. No comic book company has raised the price of the comics for the sake of paying the freelancers more money - ever."

There has been much after-the-fact uproar in recent years by men who signed away the rights to their original characters or artwork and later found their creations to be multi-million-dollar generators. Jim Shooter finds this an unprofessional attitude. "It's been the same deal for 40 years. There's no excuse for not knowing what the deal is. You go into it of your own free will, you accept the payment, so where do you get off complaining? No one held a gun to your head. When I make an agreement I try to honor it. It irritates me when people who aren't honoring the agreement they made go out and blacken the name of the industry."

But Adams thinks a gun has indeed been held to the head of every freelancer who ever signed a work agreement withtout the benefit of a guild to represent him; a gun in the shape of the dollar sign. "There is a concept in law called imbalanced contract. If you are presented with a contract and you are forced to sign that contract because you are in a lesser position than the person at the other end of the contract there is sufficient grounds to fight that contract at a later date. We would insist that in the history of comic books, without a guild, we have all been signing unfair contracts under duress. We were forced to sign those contracts because we had to support our families. That did not make those contracts fair."

Slow Progress

Still, slowly but surely, there have been changes within the companies. DC has been evolving policies whereby the freelancer can be cut in on the profits accrued by his own original creations. They've also been attempting to see that all original artwork is returned to the proper party (a practice that resulted, in part, from a one-man strike Neal Adams took up against DC in the early '70s).

Marvel, too, has been making strides. They have developed a new magazine, Epic, "the whole point of which," according to Jim Shooter, "is to try to encourage people to create things. Unlike the standard 40-cent comics, Epic, a slick, full-color magazine, will be purchasing only first-time world rights, limited to three years. "For every overseas printing," Shooter adds, "the creator gets paid a royalty which is like half the net revenue."

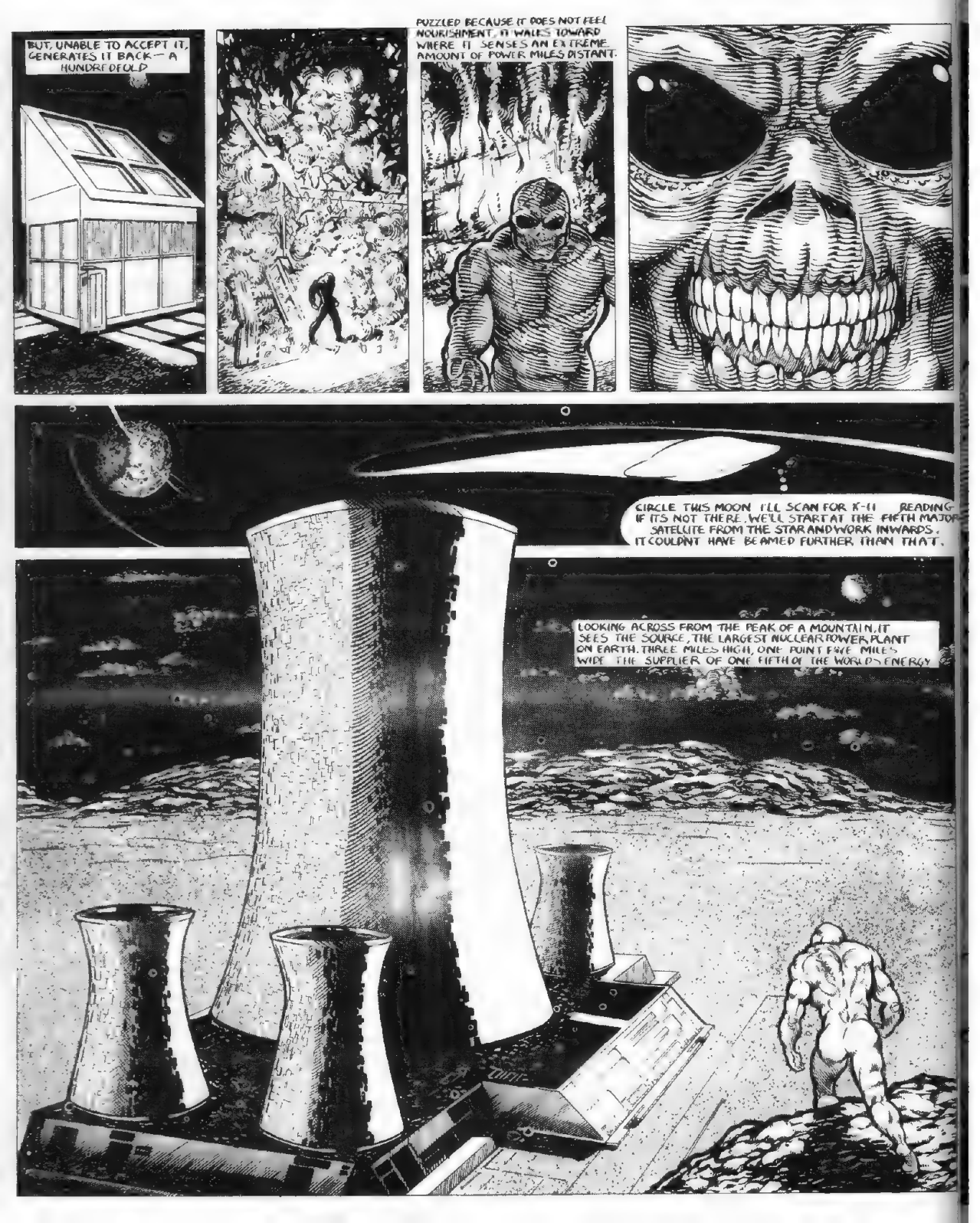
And, again unlike the smaller packages, the payment is only for print media. The creater can "make all the posters, all the movies, all the TV shows he wants. All we're (the companies) interested in is printing it once in every country, and he gets a slice."

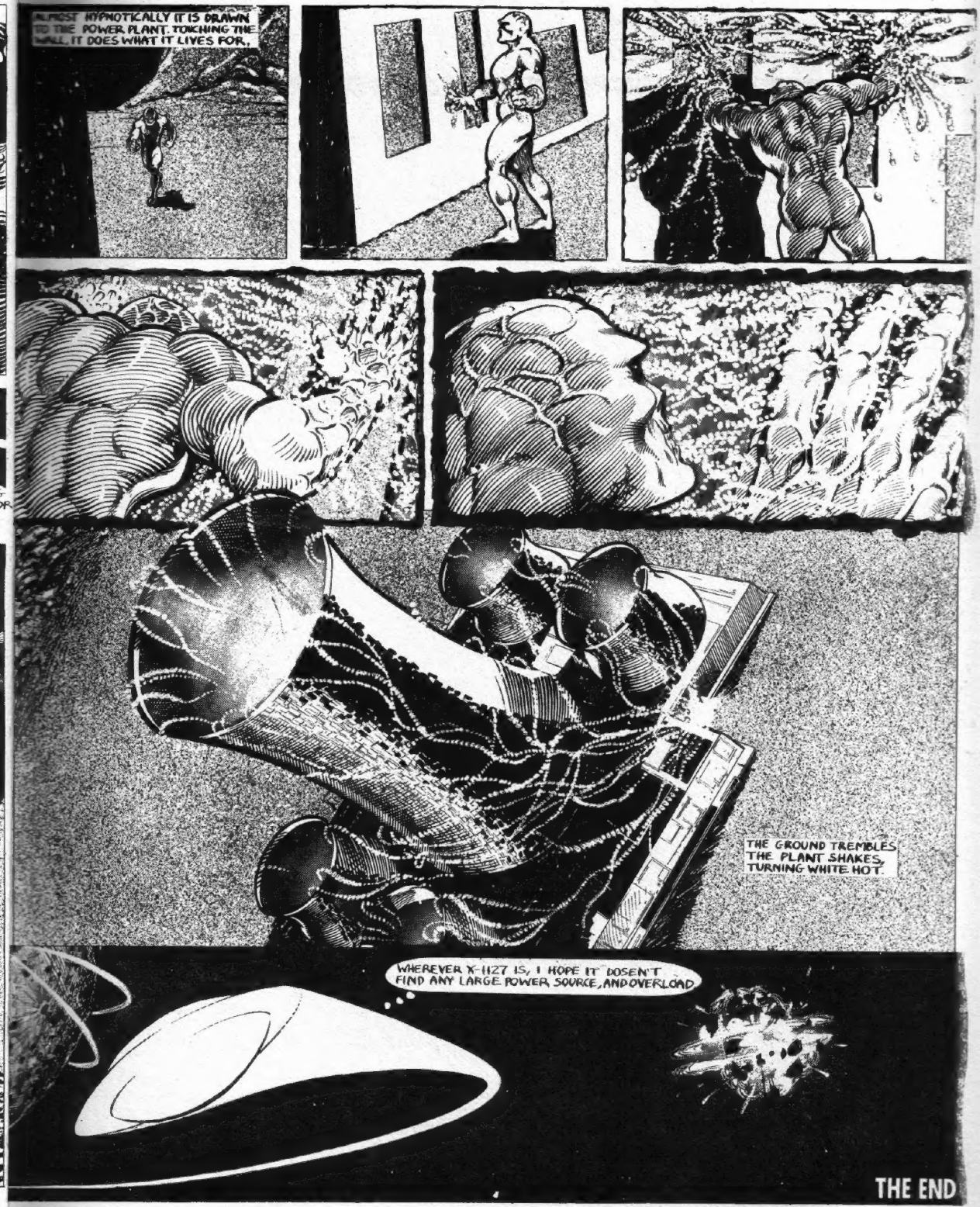
Unfortunately, Neal Adams is not a superhero and the representatives of Marvel and DC are not radiation-spawned super-villains. Thus, the outcome of this little melee is not in the bag. No one is sure what's going to happen - there is not Mister Fantastic waiting in the wings with an ultra-scientific gadget to solve all the problems overnight. So the struggle goes on and the lives of Superman, Daredevil, Green Arrow and Howard the Duck (not to mention the men and women who, monthly, bring them to life) hang precariously in the balance.

In the world of comic books, kiddies, this is a real cliff-hanger.

OVERLOAD
by O'DONNELL
X 1127 HAS ESCAPED! ITS CONTAINER IS BROKEN IT MUST'VE TRANSPORTED DOWN TO A SATELLITE IN THIS SOLAR SYSTEM
IT WAS NOT FINISHED YET. IT STILL CAN'T ABSORB POWER ALL IT CAN DO IS TAKE IT INTO ITS BODY, THEN EMIT IT, AT MANY TIMES ITS ORIGINAL FORCE, DESTROYING WHATEVER IT TRIES TO THRIVE ON
EARTH: MAR. 26 1998
IT FORMS, MILLIONS OF ELECTRICAL PARTICALS, ONCE SEPERATED, NOW REJOIN AFTER THEIR JOURNEY.
THEY SPARKLE AS THEY FORM ARMS, A TORSO, A FACE. MAKING X 1127, AN UNFINISHED PARASITE, DEVELPED BY ALIENS.
LIKE A SHARK, IT IS CONSTANTLY AWAKE TO FUFILL ITS ONE REASON FOR LIVING, THE ABSORPTION OF ENERGY!

LARGEST NUCLEAR PLANT OPENS
MINUTES LATER, IT FINDS A STORE, ONE OF THE LAST LEFT IN THIS ZONE DUE TO POSSIBLE RADITION.
IT CAN FEEL THE MARKETS GENERATOR AND MUST DRAW FROM IT. REACHING OUT, IT SUCKS THE POWER THROUGH ITS BODY.


BUT, UNABLE TO ACCEPT IT, GENERATES IT BACK — A HUNDREDFOLD
PUZZLED BECAUSE IT DOES NOT FEEL NOURISHMENT, IT WALES TOWARD WHERE IT SENSES AN EXTREME AMOUNT OF POWER MILES DISTANT.
CIRCLE THIS MOON I'LL SCAN FOR K-11 READING IF ITS NOT THERE, WE'LL START AT THE FIFTH MAJOR SATELLITE FROM THE STAR AND WORK INWARDS. IT COULDNT HAVE BEAMED FURTHER THAN THAT.
LOOKING ACROSS FROM THE PEAK OF A MOUNTAIN, IT SEES THE SOURCE, THE LARGEST NUCLEAR POWER PLANT ON EARTH. THREE MILES HIGH, ONE POINT FIVE MILES WIDE THE SUPPLIER OF ONE FIFTH OF THE WORLD'S ENERGY


ALMOST HYPNOTICALLY IT IS DRAWN TO THE POWER PLANT. TOUCHING THE WALL, IT DOES WHAT IT LIVES FOR.
THE GROUND TREMBLES. THE PLANT SHAKES, TURNING WHITE HOT.
WHEREVER X-1127 IS, I HOPE IT DOSEN'T FIND ANY LARGE POWER SOURCE, AND OVERLOAD
THE END

THIS IS WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT

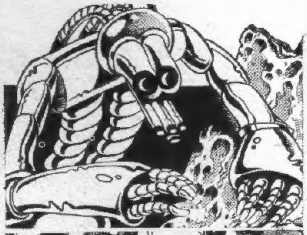
LOLLAPALOOSA

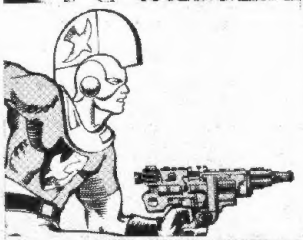
"Lollapalooza is the ultimate fanzine," Steve Hayng. "Very, very complete Neal Adams index, ultra completeness. Mitch O'Connell is a superior and competent fan artist," RBCC. "You have succeeded wonderfully," Brian Flynn. "Really looked great, the pro art was fabulous, your art was magnificent, the indices were all excellent," John Harris. "The art was some of the best I've ever seen in a fanzine, and the checklists were helpful to me in completing my collection," Craig Zablo. "Very nice," Bob Kane. "It was great," Capt. David Heath, Jr. "I'm really impressed. You've got to pick your format to best suit your contents/and intentions. And you did that beautifully," Dean Mullaney. "Nicely illustrated. Beautiful (pro art)," Dave McDonnel. "#3 was great. It's very useful," Barry Kinnebery. "I can say without a doubt that it is the most extensive Adams index ever published," Mike Kertok. "A review cannot do it justice. You can buy yourself a treat. Limited to 500 hand numbered copies, but if you're one of the lucky ones, savor it for all you're worth."

Jim Wheller, for "Comics '80"

I can only say one thing to describe my reaction: WOW!! It was the best darn 'zine I have EVER read! All the great art, artists portfolios, and articles were great! And the Batman story was better than most of the ones in his pro comic. Mitch, in my book you are the second best Batman artist there is (next to Marshall Rogers)."

Jim Valencia





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Back issues:
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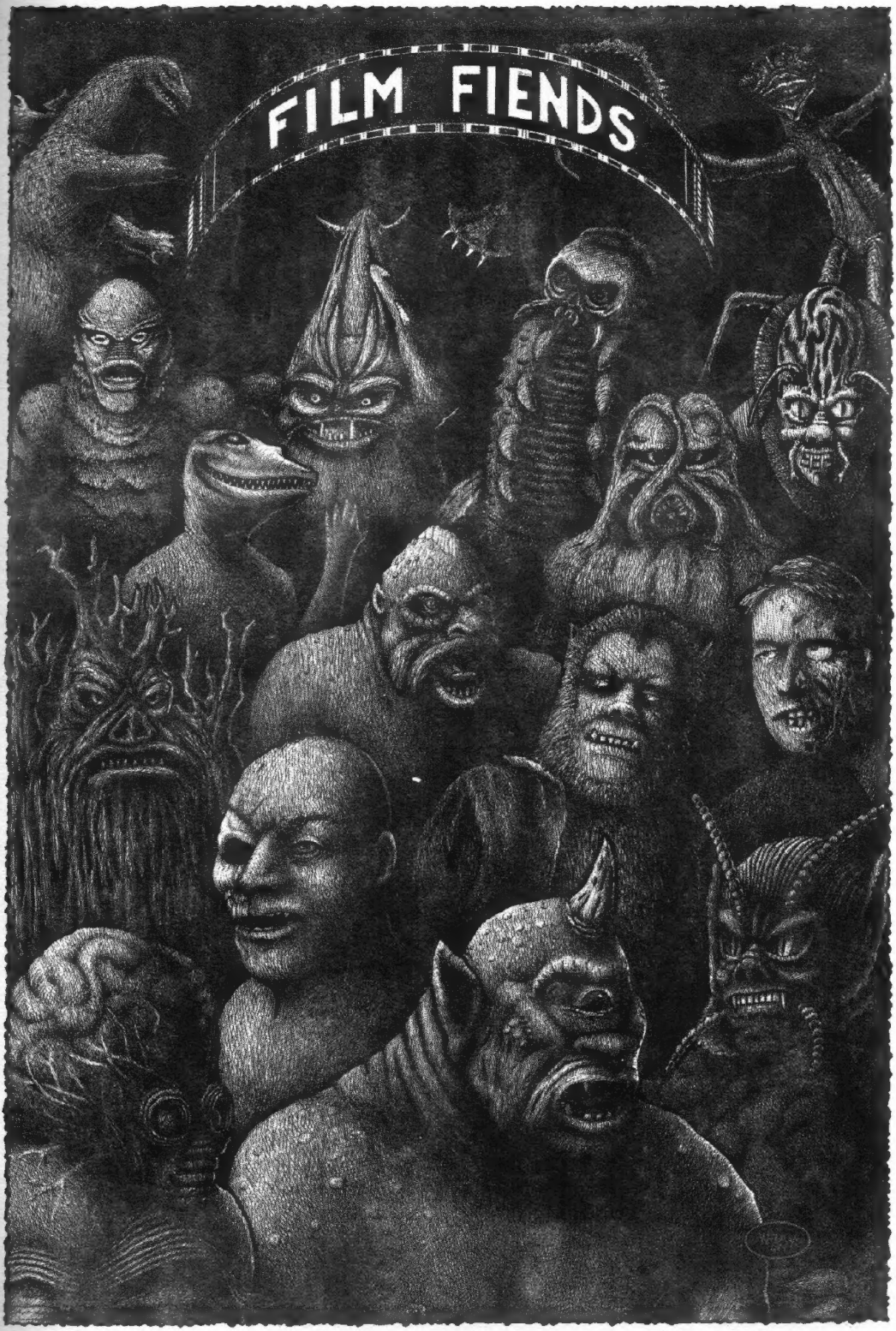
FILM FIENDS

WHAT TH-?
1982
MSLENZ